



FEMA

STRENGTHENING DISASTER RECOVERY FOR THE NATION



Strengthening Disaster Recovery for the Nation

VIDEO TELECONFERENCE (VTC)

Region V

Time: October 29, 2009, Thursday, 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM (Central)

Participating Locations: FEMA Region V, Illinois, Indiana,
Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Participation Via: VTCs, phone bridge (only) and participating through WebEx

Sectors Represented: Federal and State agencies, nonprofits and private sector and Tribal representation

Note: This product is provided as a general summary only, not a transcript of the discussion.

Region V VTC Summary

Chicago, Illinois
October 29, 2009

Region V addressed questions through Group discussion. Facilitators asked for volunteers from different backgrounds to provide the first response to start the conversation. All questions were addressed.

PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

NOTE: Responses are by questions posed and are noted using the original sequencing.

Q1: How would you define a successful disaster recovery?

- When considering successful disaster recovery, Region V participants considered: **building “back better,” vulnerable populations, resiliency and a return to “normal.”** More specifically:
 - When **socioeconomic** fabric and **infrastructure** of impacted community is restored as close as possible to pre-disaster conditions and capacity — and beyond (post-disaster conditions better than pre-disaster). One city’s rebuilding use of **“green” technologies** and best practices in construction was noted as an example of increasing capacity and building back “better”).
 - Faith-based recovery groups put focus on the most **vulnerable**: *Have the most vulnerable populations reached levels of restoration or renewal?* Region V participants want recovery leadership to think of displaced communities and families who may be forgotten.
 - *Has community capacity and resiliency been improved? If the same event happened again, will there would be less of an impact?*
 - Region V also thought successful recoveries occur when public and government officials say things are back to **“normal.”**

Q2: Are there clear phases in the disaster recovery process that are useful milestones?

- Region V participants think that long-term recovery **varies** from place-to-place and from small to large communities. For disaster with a larger scope, participants defined phases as **initial response; then 72 hours, short term up to a year after event, and long term and beyond.**

INITIAL RESPONSE	FIRST 72 HOURS	SHORT TERM (Up to a year)	LONG-TERM RECOVERY
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- Once phases are identified, milestones should be attached to phases.
- Participants think a significant milestone is when a community **transitions from short-term to long-term recovery.**

Q3: What features of Federal disaster recovery assistance are most important to you?

- Region V participants value:
 - **Shared expertise: having FEMA staff available** to advise and to draw on their experience. Participants said this is a big help to volunteer groups that are bringing in people new to the process.
 - Understanding **which agencies have which resources**.
 - **Transparency and open communication** at all levels of government.
 - Federal programs with recovery resources such as Community Development Block Grants (**CDBGs**) and Economic Development Administration (**EDA**) funding, **social services block grants** and **rural development programs**. All are important to recovery; total package helps communities recover.

Q4: How would you measure progress and what specific metrics should be considered for a successful disaster recovery?

- Several measures of success were identified by Region V participants:
 - When a local recovery committee says it is time to **establish a local Voluntary Organization Active in Disaster (VOAD)** or **Community Organization Active in Disaster (COAD)**, participants feel the fact the question is being asked “spells success.”
 - Participants said measuring the restoration of **critical infrastructure** could be a helpful metric for private sector.
 - Economic activity can be seen through the restoration of financial and small business community, **number of businesses** brought back on line essential for the long-term economic health of community.

Q5: What are best practices in managing recovery from disasters?

- Participants like Joint Field Offices (JFOs) because they gather and convene a variety of skill-sets important to recovery.
- They also like recovery **Task Forces**.
- They think State officials need to identify and articulate **requirements** for long-term recovery to inform day-to-day operational activities and so everyone knows where the effort is headed and its intended outcome.
- Participants noted **one particular state’s “one-stop shop”** as a good best practices example.

Q6: What are the appropriate State, local and Tribal roles in leading disaster recovery efforts?

- Participants think **Local Recovery Committees (LRCs)** are key to getting **volunteers** involved to help with what can seem like a fragmented process and long-term recovery. They noted the added benefit of LRCs in facilitating the **transition of responsibility** from Federal partners to local Emergency Management Agencies (EMAs) and nonprofits when Federal efforts and funding end.

Q7: How can the nonprofit and private sectors be better integrated into recovery?

- Region V recognized the importance of building **support networks and relationships** among nonprofits and between nonprofits and other recovery stakeholders before disaster events. Those networks and relationships can help recovery partners:
 - Formalize and **institutionalize knowledge** of how resources are accessed when needed.
 - Build **capacity** needed in local sectors.
- Nonprofits also provide important channels to facilitate **private sector** involvement in recovery, critical to getting the economy up and running again.

Q8: What are best practices for community recovery planning that incorporates public input?

- Region V said using hazard mitigation planning and its **outreach process** is a best practice.
- Additionally, they think:
 - **Pre-event planning** to prepare the public before disaster strikes is a good idea.
 - **Timing is key:** Pre-disaster is the best time to begin public involvement; during a disaster time is compressed and limited.

Q9: How can Federal, State and local disaster planning and recovery processes and programs be best coordinated?

- Robust local **training** through EMAs is important to Region V along with **strengthening the abilities of planners** to be a part of the recovery planning process.
- They also think incentives/additional funding through Emergency Management Performance Grants (EMPGs) are helpful.

Q10: (Breakout Question) As disaster recovery is primarily a State and local leadership issue, what are best practices for the timing (including start and end) and form of Federal assistance and coordination?

- Participants said:
 - Building local **capacity, quality** of the local planning function and **strong local leadership** are key.
 - Best practice is strong **mandatory** comprehensive planning.
- Participants also identified **challenges**:
 - **Lack of full-time planners** is an issue; looking at hazard mitigation for long-term planning can help fill the need.
 - Capacity **varies from place-to-place**. Communities with low capacity are likely to need help. Building long-term capacity within the community and the State is essential.

Q11: What are the greatest capacity challenges that local and State governments face in disaster recovery and what are the best practices for increasing that capacity?

- **Staffing** is challenging. Cross training so staff **know other program areas** and how they might **integrate** with their own is important to Region V participants. Currently Region V is attempting to cross-train between Individual Assistance (IA), Public Assistance (PA), mitigation and other divisions within agency.
- **Funding is challenging**. Using CDBG funding for recovery is a help. EMPG funding is problematic as it can fund staff but also purchase equipment but can build capacity this way.
- **Visioning**. Particularly for small communities, it is important to have a **vision for long-term recovery** — success is not possible without a plan and without one other State and Federal agencies are limited in how much they can help with recovery.
- **Training**. Region V participants think the emphasis has been on *short-term response*. They think there is a need for **more training and capacity building for long-term recovery**.
- **Flexibility**. They also think **program flexibility** is important. **Political boundaries** may need to be crossed and other “out-of-the-pane” opportunities may arise. Program flexibility is needed to take advantage of those opportunities to move recovery forward. People who distribute dollars (grant writers) need to understand the differences between short- and long-term recovery in order to provide informed care giving..

Q 12: (Breakout Question) What are best practices for marshaling Federal assistance both financial and professional support – to support State and local efforts to recover from a disaster, and how can we work together to better leverage existing Federal grant dollars?

- Participants think best practice is when national **Disaster Declaration** is made **quickly** and **affirmatively**. The opposite is when a lot of time and effort is required in the application process. While applications are being written and processed, communities suffer.
- They want to see **recovery partners work together better**. If a disaster is declared, Federal programs appear all at once. Region V participants want to see representatives at the JFO to **coordinate** funding.

- Participants think **getting information out to communities** about available FEMA programs is essential to recovery. A best practice for informing cities of FEMA programs is the current 40 to 45-city tour, talking to communities regarding how to get to resources.

Q13: What unmet needs are common to most disasters that do not seem to be adequately addressed under the current systems and programs?

- Region V identified the following as significant unmet recovery needs:
 - Difficulty in meeting **human services** before recovery starts and after. There is no line item funding set aside to address these needs. Therefore, we have to rely on **social service block grant money which appears later in recovery** process. One participant said, “We deal with this in every disaster” and it slows recovery progress.
 - FEMA doesn’t cover damages perceived to be **due to deferred maintenance**. However, there is a fine line between **deferred maintenance** and **disaster management**. Poorer communities do not have money to do routine maintenance so when disaster strikes it becomes the “straw that breaks the camel’s back.” Long-term needs need to identified, considered, addressed and funded.

Q 14: What are best practices for integrating economic and environmental sustainability into recovery?

- Approaches Region V participant like include:
 - Integrating **hazardous site clean-up** and “**green**” **lessons** into long-term recovery (e.g., instead of land filling or burning trees – shred and using the shredded material on-site).
 - Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided flexibility for grantees within communities. Specifically in grantee agreements, local governments **can reprogram monies** for funding for recovery.
 - Involvement of State environmental management agencies in providing **assistance for long-term recovery**. Participants think this is important way to bring people together to work towards economic and environmental sustainability goals.

Q15: What are best practices for integrating mitigation and resilience into recovery?

- Region V wants to see:
 - **Hazard mitigation planning linked to local comprehensive planning** before disasters occur.
 - Hazard mitigation and disaster recovery **woven into comprehensive planning** (even in visioning and goal-setting).
 - **Zoning practices**, such as Safe Growth Audits (reference to David Godchalk article), should also reflect integrated hazard mitigation strategies and initiatives.
 - Enabling legislation
 - Local agencies to integrate into recovery practices early.
- Region V also acknowledged the importance of **disaster education** in achieving successful recoveries.

Q16: What else would you like us to know?

- Region V suggested an ongoing conversation to talk about **managing recovery once the JFO closes**, Federal programs are expended and there are still unmet needs. Communities are just then beginning the process of recovery (acquiring flood damaged properties, e.g.). *Once FEMA disappears, how does local government provide support?*
- They also took this opportunity to reinforce messaging that **States and localities are struggling economically**.
- Finally, they want to see more funding and support for **training and planning at local level**.